Rogues and chose General Gastelnau as the head of the military section of their mission.

Then came a series of postponements—all of them ominous of trouble. The subterranean fires in Russia had already begun to break through the *Troubles in* crust. News came of the assassination of Rasputin—the Czar's protege and the Czarina's friend—by a cabal of young aristocrats. The anger of the Court found vent in a shifting of Ministers who had failed to protect the favourite. The rumbling underneath became louder, and the seething and spluttering of steam and boiling mud became everywhere more apparent and disquieting.

At the request of the Russian Government, the start of the Allied Mission was put off to the middle of January in the vain hope that the volcanic fires might subside. The next postponement was significant of further trouble. The Russians expressed the desire that the visit should be further postponed, on the ground that the Duma was due to meet on 25th January, and as its first sessions were expected to be stormy the Russian Government therefore preferred that the Allied Conference should not begin its deliberations till at least three or four sessions of the Duma had taken place. In fact, the air of the Russian capital became so charged with sulphurous exhalations that the opening of the Duma was postponed for a month, to keep out the lava from surging in hot fury around the Conference doors. Its first

meeting was actually held on ayth February, a week after the Allied Conference had concluded. In another fortnight the revolutionary crater had opened, and the fires are still reddening the Eastern sky.

The representatives of Britain, France and Italy